



Seattle Office for Civil Rights

# 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Equal rights and social justice for all.



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# A message from the Director

## Patricia Lally

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It was a thrilling moment when Mayor Murray appointed me as the Director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. Eager for both the challenge and opportunity to serve in this capacity, I also was humbled by the honor to serve the City of Seattle.

While I would love to take the credit for my good fortune, I know better. Rather, I am here because of the sacrifices of my parents—two amazing hard-working people who never had the opportunities or privilege that some may take for granted. Although neither of them completed high school, they believed in education, they believed in fairness, and they instilled those beliefs in me.

Many years later, I stand on the shoulders of my parents and the many who fought for social justice, so that I could fulfil my dreams. And that's where the weight of responsibility comes in. I have a responsibility to make this dream of fulfillment possible for other people now and in the future. Moreover, I believe that each of us has that responsibility. We stand on people's shoulders; in our turn, we take on the burden for others.

When I arrived at SOCR in January 2014, I met twenty-five passionate and dedicated professional staff. We have different job descriptions, but we all share the same goal: advance civil rights and remove barriers to equity. In our Enforcement Unit, highly trained civil rights analysts investigate allegations of discrimination against individuals. Staff in our Policy Shop research and recommend actions on a range of civil rights issues. Our RSJI team coordinates the City of Seattle's nationally recognized Race and Social Justice Initiative, which works to achieve racial equity across our region.

As a new director with fresh eyes, I get to ask ourselves some basic but powerful questions. How can we use our current civil rights laws to help people seeking justice? How can we help the City of Seattle extend the boundaries of social justice? How can we serve our



communities the way they want to be served, not just in the ways we want to serve them?

Seattle is one of the most progressive cities in the world. We pride ourselves on our commitment to justice and we work to achieve equity. Yet by any measure, Seattle remains a tale of two cities: an official narrative of fairness, and a street-level story of institutional and structural barriers based on our race, our gender, our country of origin, our degree of disability and a variety of other factors.

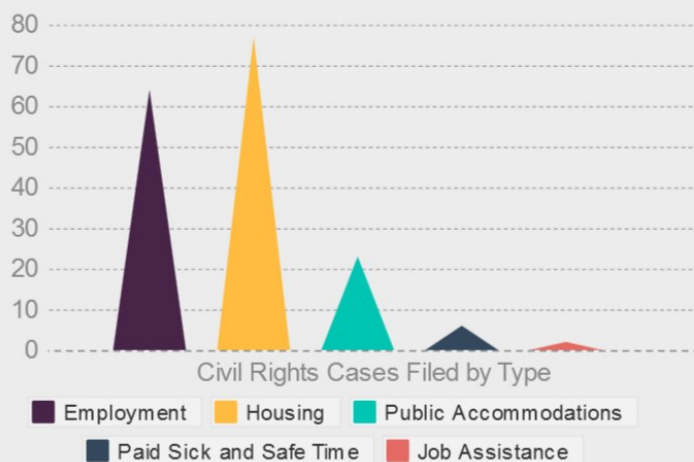
There is no hierarchy of oppression: when one person is treated poorly, our entire community pays a steep price. Thankfully, we have power when we work together. This Annual Report summarizes the work of people of who came before me. I want to acknowledge former SOCR director Julie Nelson, whose leadership is reflected here. This report looks back to our accomplishments in 2013; but I hope you join me to look forward to 2014 and beyond – to partner with SOCR to achieve racial and social justice that people feel across all the neighborhoods of Seattle.

# Enforcement

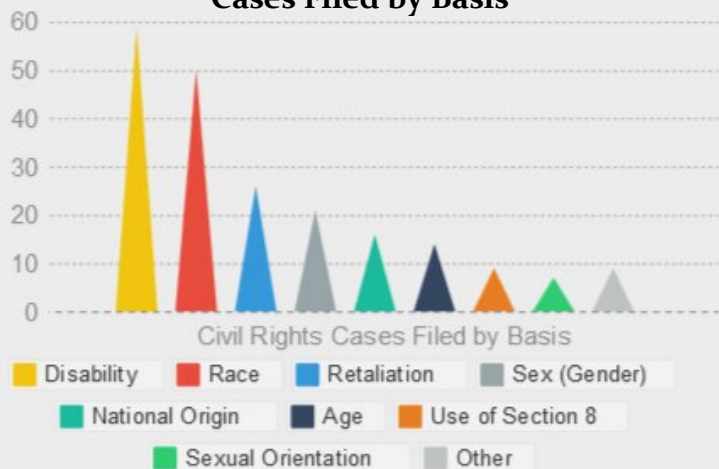
SOCR enforces civil rights laws in housing, employment, public accommodations and contracting, as well as labor standards laws such as Seattle's Paid Sick and Safe Time and Job Assistance ordinances.

When someone files a charge with SOCR, we conduct an investigation and issue a finding based on the evidence. Whenever possible, we work to negotiate a settlement that all sides can agree to. Negotiated settlements help everyone involved find solutions that fit their specific situations. As part of a settlement, respondents often receive training that helps them avoid similar issues in the future.

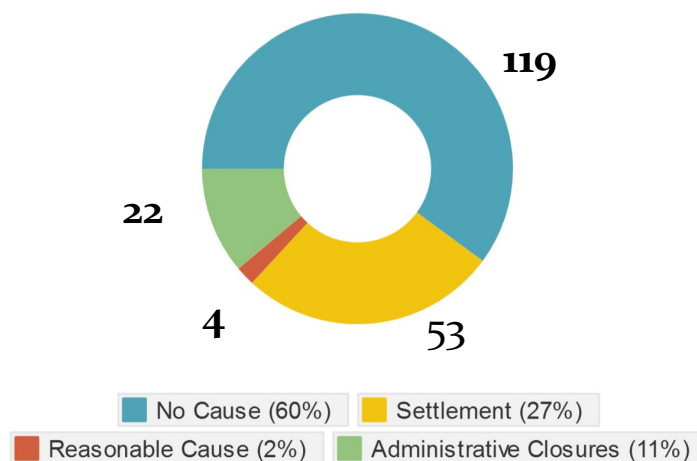
## Cases Filed by Type



## Cases Filed by Basis



## Cases Resolved by Type of Resolution



## Stories from 2013

### EMPLOYMENT

A woman working at a large local hospital filed a charge with SOCR alleging that her employer was discriminating against her because of her disability. But before we had a chance to investigate, the woman reported to us that she had been abruptly fired from her \$80,000/year job. To settle her claim of retaliation, the hospital agreed to pay her \$22,000 to cover lost wages and out-of-pocket medical expenses.

### PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

A clothing bank refused to serve a transgender individual who wanted to choose women's clothing. The organization agreed to settle the case for \$200 in compensation and agreeing to provide gender identity awareness training to all staff and volunteers.

### HOUSING

A local homeless shelter turned away a man with a service animal. Even after the man provided full medical documentation to support his need, the shelter flatly refused to accommodate him. In settlement, the man received \$2,000 in compensation, and the shelter agreed to rewrite its service animal policies so this type of situation wouldn't happen again.



# Paid Sick and Safe Time

On September 12, 2011, Seattle City Council passed an ordinance requiring employers with more than four full-time equivalent employees to provide paid sick and safe time (PSST) to employees working in Seattle. The ordinance affects about 150,000 employees who work within Seattle city limits and thousands of employers based in and outside Seattle.

Council designated SOCR to enforce the PSST ordinance. In 2012, SOCR conducted a wide-ranging campaign to inform businesses and the public of the new law, including more than twenty presentations and meetings with businesses and business associations, fifteen forums for the public, and door-to-door outreach to immigrant and refugee business owners. By the close of 2013, SOCR had responded to over 1,913 employer and 338 employee questions about PSST. We also sent 141 advisory letters to employers: 91% of these letters were resolved informally, with employers voluntarily revising their leave policies to comply with the new law. Only six formal charges had been filed.



**PAID SICK & SAFE TIME**  
Seattle Works Well

## Enforcing the PSST Ordinance

**A construction company based outside Seattle regularly sent work crews into the city on long-term assignments. When the employer learned about Seattle's new PSST law, the company decided to extend the new benefit to all its employees throughout King County, not just the ones working here.**

**In another case, an employee wrote our investigator to say that her company "has now initiated Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Leave, replaced our old attendance policy with this new one, and are complying with the law."**



## Enforcing the JAO Ordinance

**A national chain bakery fired a longtime employee who had a 25-year old criminal conviction. The company terminated her immediately, rather than follow the procedures in the law that would have given the employee a chance to explain her situation.**

**After the employee filed a complaint with SOCR, the company offered her a financial settlement and revised its policies to comply with the Job Assistance Ordinance.**

# Job Assistance Ordinance

Seattle City Council passed the Seattle Job Assistance Ordinance (JAO) after community organizations urged action to give people a fair chance to get jobs – especially communities of color disproportionately impacted by blanket hiring exclusions based on criminal history. Council named SOCR to enforce the JAO Ordinance, which went into effect on November 1, 2013.

SOCR began by convening a Stakeholder Panel of employers, legal advocates and social service agencies to advise us on how to enforce the new law, as well as strategies to inform employers and the public. Public meetings, mass mailings, a media campaign and outreach to employers – including 17 meetings with immigrant business owners – helped spread the word.

By the end of 2013, SOCR had filed two charges based on then new law.

# Eliminating Barriers to Equity

**The Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is the City of Seattle's effort to realize the vision of racial equity.**



*RSJI works within City government and with community leaders to get to the root cause of racial inequity: institutional racism. RSJI is led by the Seattle Office of Civil Rights.*

## RSJI's 2012-14 Plan

RSJI's 3-year plan asked all City departments to:

- Apply racial equity to departmental programs and policies.
- Build racial equity into Citywide initiatives.
- Partner with other institutions and the community.

## Highlights of 2013



### Governing for Racial Equity Network and Conference

SOCR convened the Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) Network to unite governments across the Pacific Northwest to work together for racial equity.

Nearly 500 people attended the GRE Conference in Seattle in late 2012 to strengthen alliances and share promising practices. Portland and Multnomah County in Oregon were slated to host the next GRE Conference in 2014.





# RSJI Highlights



## RSJI Community Survey

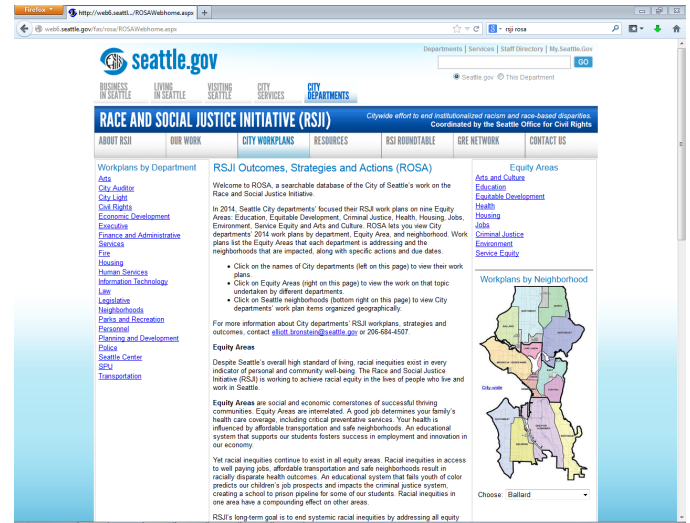
In 2013 SOCR conducted the first RSJI Community Survey from November 11-27. More than 3,000 individuals responded to an online survey; another 400 people completed the survey over the phone. SOCR planned to issue a full report on the survey to the community in the spring of 2014.

## RSJ Community Roundtable

The Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable is a partnership of twenty-five community organizations and public institutions working together to achieve racial equity in Seattle.

In 2013 the Roundtable created its first Statewide Legislative Agenda, with priorities to oppose the death penalty, support state-wide paid sick leave, the DREAM ACT, the Youth Opportunities Act and the Voting Rights Act.

More than 200 people were joined by eleven elected officials at the Legislative Summit on Racial Equity on December 3, 2013, to build support for racial equity in the 2014 Washington State legislative session.



## 2013 in City government

### ROSA: public accountability

ROSA is a public searchable database of the City departments' work on the Race and Social Justice Initiative. (ROSA stands for "RSJI Outcomes, Strategies and Actions.")

With ROSA, community members can read about departments' progress on eight Equity Areas: Education, Equitable Development, Criminal Justice, Health, Housing, Jobs, Environment and Service Equity.

### Full inclusion sign-in sheet

In 2013, City departments started using the full inclusion sign-in sheet to gather demographic information on race, gender, language spoken, age and other factors. The anonymous sign-in form helps the City measure the diverse range of people attending City-sponsored community meetings and events.



# Working to Achieve Equity

## GENDER EQUITY

A 2013 analysis of census data by the National Partnership for Women and Families (NWPf) ranked Seattle as having the widest gender wage gap among the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas. In response to the NWPf report, then-Mayor McGinn and City Council directed the City's Personnel Department to conduct a review of gender equity for City employees.

The review found that the City of Seattle does have gender disparities in pay, although not to the same degree as in the private sector. In response, the Mayor's Office convened a Gender Equity in Pay Task Force co-chaired by SOCR and composed of a diverse group of community experts. Their assignment: to develop short and long term recommendations to end gender-based wage gaps in City of Seattle employment.

The Task Force met five times in the fall of 2013. Members conducted statistical analyses of City payroll data, examining differences in pay and occupation by gender and race. The Task Force also conducted a survey of City employees to develop a better picture of departmental work culture, perceptions around flexible work arrangements, impact of family responsibilities and limits to upward mobility.



Former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi discussed gender equity at Seattle City Hall on November 25, 2013.

In early 2014, the Task Force released its official report, containing a comprehensive list of recommendations, including the development of a Gender Equity Initiative in the City of Seattle. The Mayor and City Council are considering the Task Force's recommendations.

## SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES

In 2013 SOCR also strengthened our support to businesses and employers with personalized technical assistance, trainings and written information to address employers' questions about anti-discrimination and Labor Standards laws.



In 2013, SOCR responded to over 971 employer inquiries about PSST and JAO, organized numerous workshops for employers, and sat down with dozens of business organizations. We translated our JAO brochure into 8 languages for non-English speaking business owners and created special materials for the Washington Film Industry.



# Commissions

*The Seattle Office for Civil Rights staffs four independent commissions that advise the Mayor, City Council and City departments.*

## Seattle Human Rights Commission

In 2013, SHRC consulted with the U.S. Department of Justice, the Mayor and Council to shape the settlement agreement for reform of the Seattle Police Department.

The Commission also held public forums to discuss human rights and bias crimes.



## Seattle Women's Commission

The Women's Commission advocated for the City of Seattle to add "breastfeeding in public" to its list of classes protected from discrimination.

The Commission participated in the Gender Equity in Pay Task Force and hosted a rally for reauthorization of the federal Violence Against Women Act.



## Seattle Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Commission

The LGBT Commission worked with SOCR to provide civil rights training from an LGBT perspective to City employees.

The Commission also supported the campaign for marriage equality in Washington State.



## Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities

The disAbilities Commission provided crucial perspective to City and County disaster preparedness planners on the needs of people with disabilities in an emergency.

The Commission also worked with Seattle's Department of Transportation and state officials to reform the "disabled parking placard" system.

## Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities

Promoting access, inclusion, and equity for people with disabilities